THE PLOT TO KILL HITLER

GENERAL ERNST REMER

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Otto Ernst Remer

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CONTENTS

Foreword
My Entry into Politics 5
I. Part
My role on 20 July 1944 in Berlin 8
Conclusions 15
II. Part
German politics and the question of remilitarisation 21

FOREWORD

My Entry into Politics

In June 1949, German men gathered in Godesberg on the Rhine to protest, for the first time since the collapse, against the piecemeal surrender of the German Reich and its division into a western and an eastern ‘satellite state’. Until the establishment of the West German Federal Republic and the immediate subsequent founding of the German Democratic Republic in the Soviet occupation zone, the German Reich had not ceased to exist either de facto or de jure, as has been repeatedly and unequivocally established by numerous domestic and foreign experts in constitutional law. For it was not the German Reich, represented by the last head of state of a unified Germany, Grand Admiral Dönitz, but merely the High Command of the German Wehrmacht as a purely military body – and this cannot be emphasised strongly enough – that signed the instruments of surrender on 8 May 1945. It was only the willingness of post-war German politicians to yield to the Allies’ desire for the permanent fragmentation of German unity by establishing a separate West German or Central German state that effectively sacrificed the idea of the Reich—which stretches from the earliest periods of German history right up to the present day—for the sake of the momentary success of a semblance of sovereignty. Future generations will undoubtedly regard this process as a fateful German contribution to the long-term fragmentation of the Reich. No amount of propaganda, however insistent, will be able to obscure the true course of events or conceal those responsible from the incorruptible judgement of future historiography. It was only through Germany’s consent to this division of the state that the victorious powers were given the opportunity to expand their occupation zone into a sphere of influence and deployment, thereby eliminating the only possible starting point for a genuine pan-European policy for the foreseeable future.

Those gathered in Godesberg were determined to protest against this foreseeable development—which was becoming clearer by the day—before the German nation and the world, and at the same time to give voice to the genuine German-European opposition in the forthcoming Bundestag election. After a thorough examination of the situation, it was agreed to address the electorate directly through an appeal, urging them to nominate and elect independent candidates, since the military governments had up to that point persistently refused to authorise any political groups other than the so-called 'licensed' parties.

Although I had been invited to this meeting, I refrained from taking part in the discussion, and when I was asked to sign a joint declaration, I expressed my position in the following words: 'This appeal is worded in such a way that any conscientious German—and that includes me—would have to sign it. I am well aware that my signature will serve as a beacon for thousands of German soldiers who know me as a front-line commander. However, I also know that, as a result of my decision of 20 July 1944, a section of the German officer corps will, from the outset, be driven into opposition to a cause that is in itself good and necessary, should I visibly participate in it. However, in order to rule out any possibility of a division of opinion on a matter vital to the survival of the Reich, I shall sign this appeal only on the condition that a former opponent of the National Socialist regime—provided he sincerely believed he was serving the interests of the German nation and the Reich—is prepared to co-sign it at the same time as I do."

I made this statement at the time in the knowledge that, on this fateful issue, one's stance towards the former regime was irrelevant and that what mattered was the purity of one's convictions. Unfortunately, none of the surviving participants in the

20 July 1944 was prepared to add his name to the appeal. Apparently, their hatred was directed solely at Adolf Hitler's regime, but not at the policy of coercion pursued by external powers which, after 1945—particularly through the Morgenthau Plan—sought to destroy what remained of the Reich and the German national fabric with the aid of German henchmen, without a single word of protest being heard from the ranks of the former 'resistance fighters'. However, this compliance – despite all the self-adulation otherwise on display – and the persistent attacks on my political stance, coming precisely from the ranks of the former resistance fighters, have decisively altered my view of the true motives behind this intra-German 'resistance', which arose in the midst of a terrible struggle of nations against its own leadership — not in order to continue the struggle with even greater determination, but to bring it to an end under any conditions, however wretched —.

Nevertheless, I would have continued to remain silent about the events of 20 July 1944 had I not, since making this statement, been

been continuously vilified by a principled press as a murderer, a bloodhound and, more recently, a traitor to my comrades—an accusation which, not least in the interests of my former subordinates, I cannot simply accept. Since 8 May 1945, such a fog of lies and fabrications has been spread by all those with a vested interest – and there are far too many of them – regarding Germany's recent past that it is now high time to shed some light on the matter. I had not yet returned home from Godesberg when, as if on a secret cue, the entire licensed press pounced on me, seeking to slander and cast suspicion on me in every possible way. All too soon I discerned the intention not merely to target me, but, through me, to target the millions of decent German soldiers who, true to their oath, had turned their backs on the conspirators of 20 July 1944 and had chosen, right to the bitter end, to direct their resistance against the external enemy of the Reich and the German nation. It was only then that I resolved to step out of my reserve. For if one allows, on the one hand, 'resistance fighters' and concentration camp prisoners to be glorified as heroes, whilst, on the other hand, dutiful soldiers and workers are reviled as criminals and fools, one makes oneself complicit in the defilement of the memory of countless dead who fell whilst remaining true to their oath.

It is therefore not my fault that the debate on the legitimacy of internal resistance during the Second World War has taken on such a heated tone; it would have been better for Germany's future if it could have been conducted objectively and impartially. But this was evidently of little concern to those who serve the cause of the continued subjugation and fragmentation of the German people. Now that the debate has been set in motion – as a result of the excessive glorification of the failed assassination attempt and the ongoing denigration of German soldiers who remained true to their oath (and this was the overwhelming majority, who vehemently reject being treated as a gullible flock of sheep, to be 'excused', as it were — has now got under way in this way, let it be conducted with unreserved candour. Should the martyr's halo surrounding the 20 July assassins fade a little in the process, the blame certainly does not lie with me.

I would not, however, dare to speak out on such a sensitive issue if I were not still convinced today of the necessity of my intervention on 20 July 1944, and indeed if I were not determined to act in exactly the same way again in a similar situation, for, like an oath, honour is indivisible. The very essence of honour, however, is loyalty.

I. PART

My role
on 20 July 1944 in Berlin

My appointment as commander of the 'Groß-Deutschland' Guard Regiment in Berlin was actually intended as a form of recuperation and in recognition of the numerous wounds I had sustained at the front and the decorations for valour I had received there. I commanded the Guard Regiment for only three months in total. When I was posted to Berlin, I had already been wounded eight times and had been awarded the Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross. I was wounded again later on.

My duties as commander of the Guard Regiment, a post I took up at the end of May 1944, consisted not only of purely ceremonial responsibilities but also of securing the Reich capital. As there were around 1 million foreign workers employed in the surrounding area and in Berlin itself, the possibility of internal unrest had to be taken into account.
In the early afternoon of 20 July 1944, my regiment, like all units of the Reserve Army, was alerted by the code-word 'Valkyrie'. This code-word was intended for the mobilisation of the Reserve Army in the event of internal unrest. Whilst the prepared measures were being set in motion within my regiment, I proceeded, in accordance with orders, to my superior's headquarters, the Berlin City Command. Unlike other subordinate commanders waiting in the antechamber, I was the only one to be admitted immediately to the City Commandant, Lieutenant-General von Hase, who briefed me on the situation and our mission as follows: 'The Führer has met with a fatal accident! Internal unrest has broken out; the Army is taking over law and order! The Guard Regiment is ordered to cordon off the government district so that neither a general nor a minister can pass through the cordon!"
As the orders were being issued, I noticed that the commander was being assisted by a new General Staff officer, a Major, whilst the former Chief of the General Staff stood by idly and appeared conspicuously nervous.
I was, naturally, shaken by the information I had been given and asked immediately: "Is the Führer really dead? Was it an accident or an assassination? Where has civil unrest broken out? I

‘I didn’t notice anything on my drive through Berlin! Why is executive power being transferred to the Army and not to the Wehrmacht? Who is the Führer’s successor? Surely the successor must be the Reich Marshal! Are there any orders or proclamations from him?’

As the answers did not give me a clear picture of the situation, but rather aroused a certain mistrust in me, I tried to look at the documents lying on the city commander’s desk in front of General von Hase. These documents were then ostentatiously taken away by the General Staff officer and placed in a folder. On the journey to my regiment, I was preoccupied by the thought: ‘Hitler is dead; now there is chaos, and various figures are probably trying to succeed him.’

In any case, I resolved that, in my capacity as commander of the only active unit in Berlin, I would under no circumstances allow myself to be exploited. I recalled the situation in 1918, which had earned the Berlin troops the historical reproach that their hesitation had contributed to the success of the revolution. On returning to my unit, I immediately convened a meeting of officers and outlined the situation and our mission. I left no doubt that much seemed unclear and dubious to me, and that I was not prepared to allow myself or my unit to be misused in any way. I demanded unconditional obedience and trust in me personally from every officer, just as I had been accustomed to as a front-line soldier. After the meeting, I received two reports that caused me concern. Firstly, Lieutenant Dr Hagen, who was present and belonged to my staff, reported that an hour earlier, on his way to see me, he had seen Field Marshal von Brauchitsch in full uniform in Berlin. This was striking, as von Brauchitsch was retired, and his appearance in uniform, of all things, in the given situation was surprising. Secondly, Lieutenant-Colonel Wolters, who had been assigned to me by the command headquarters as a liaison officer, assured me that I should not believe he was an informer. Such a statement from an active officer was not only unusual and irritating, but was bound to arouse my suspicion that the cards were somehow being played with hidden hands. Shortly afterwards, I was informed that Lieutenant-Colonel Wolters had disappeared without giving notice. As it later transpired, his address to my officers had caused him to have doubts and, in order to shirk responsibility, he had simply driven home – behaviour unthinkable for an active officer.

My doubts as to whether the city commander’s account of the situation corresponded to the actual facts led me to decide to assess the situation for myself and to contact all available authorities. This is a course of action that any commander would naturally take before deploying his troops. The result of these enquiries was that everywhere the same...

and uncertainty. I therefore decided to send Lieutenant Dr Hagen, who had previously worked in the Ministry of Propaganda, to the Reich Defence Commissioner, assuming that he would be informed not only of the military situation but also of the political situation. The Reich Defence Commissioner for Berlin was Dr Goebbels.

About one and a half hours after the 'Valkyrie' order was issued, the troops were ready for action and moved into the designated cordoned-off areas as ordered. After personally inspecting the operation on the spot, I went to the City Commander, General von Hase, to report that the order had been carried out. On this occasion, I was given the additional order to cordon off the block of buildings north of Anhalter Bahnhof (shown on the map) with particular rigour.

When I attempted to carry out this order on the spot, I discovered that the Reich Security Main Office was housed in the designated building complex. The vagueness, not to say insincerity, of the order I had been given could only serve to heighten my suspicion that something was amiss. Why was I not given the clear order to keep an eye on the Reich Security Service? I had, of course, carried out that order as well.

During my third visit to General von Hase, I therefore asked him directly: "Why, General, am I being given such vaguely worded orders? Why am I not being told that I am to keep a close watch on the Reich Security Service?" Hase was very nervous and agitated and did not address my question at all. However, I gathered from a conversation between General von Hase and his new Chief of Staff that he now also had to arrest Goebbels and that this task was to be carried out by me. As I was not comfortable with carrying out this task, I intervened in the conversation and said to General von Hase: 'General, I consider myself utterly unsuitable! You know that I have been a long-standing member of the Großdeutschland Division, whose sleeve insignia I still wear to this day. You are aware that Dr Goebbels, as Gauleiter of Berlin, is also the patron of the Großdeutschland Division. Only 14 days ago, I paid Goebbels my customary personal courtesy call in his capacity as patron of the Großdeutschland Division; and for this reason I consider it inappropriate to entrust me, of all people, with the arrest of my patron."

It is likely that von Hase understood my objections, or perhaps, for other reasons, he now handed over the task of arresting him to the Army Patrol Service and detention the Reich Minister Goebbels. After leaving the office of the City Commander von Hase, the officer I had sent to the Reich Defence Commissioner finally caught up with me in the corridor and reported the outcome of his enquiries: "A completely new situation! This is probably a military coup! The Reich Defence Commissioner requests that you come to him immediately! If you have not reported to him within 20 minutes, he must assume that you are being held by force

. He will then be forced to alert the Watten SS."
The trust I still had at that time in General von Hase can be seen from the fact that I instructed Lieutenant Dr Hagen to repeat the message just conveyed to General von Hase in my presence. My request to be allowed to comply with this request from the Reich Defence Commissioner and to bring about a clarification of the situation—which was necessary in everyone's interests—was rejected. After leaving the command post, I considered what I should do next.
I came to the decision to travel to Goebbels's office despite the order to the contrary, for the following reasons:
I did not wish to allow my freedom of action to be taken away from me;
I still felt bound by my oath, for as yet the report of the Führer's death remained, at the very least, doubtful. I therefore had to act as my oath of allegiance dictated;
at the front, I had been left to my own devices countless times and had had to make independent decisions, the correctness of which had been confirmed by the awarding of high honours. Many a situation could only be mastered through resolute action. I felt at one with my comrades at the front, who would not have understood if, for lack of moral courage, I had sat idly by and, through my own fault, allowed a situation to develop that could have proved disastrous;
I found myself in a predicament, as Dr Goebbels was planning to put the Waffen-SS on alert, meaning that a clash between the Waffen-SS and the Army was to be expected. As commander of the only active unit in Berlin, I was responsible for the lives of the soldiers entrusted to my care. It was not my place to deploy them for a cause that was entirely unclear.
I was, however, also suspicious of Goebbels as a person, for as the assumption still prevailed that the Führer was dead, I considered a struggle for his succession a possibility. It was the last thing on my mind to allow myself and my unit to be drawn into such a struggle for succession. As Goebbels's position was unclear to me, I took a lieutenant and a platoon of soldiers with me on my visit to him; they had orders to get me out of there one way or another if I had not left Goebbels's ministry after a quarter of an hour.
I then made my way into Goebbels' office with my pistol cocked and asked him to brief me on the situation. Goebbels, for his part, asked me to tell him what I knew. I complied with this request, though I made no mention of von Hase's planned arrest, as I was unsure what role he played in the whole of this unclear situation. When asked what I intended to do, I told him that I would abide by my military orders and carry them out—

. Even though the Führer is no longer alive, I feel bound by my oath and can only act as my conscience as an officer dictates.
Goebbels then looked at me in astonishment and said: “Why? The Führer is alive, after all! I’ve just spoken to him on the telephone! The assassination attempt has failed.”
This information came as a complete surprise to me. I asked Goebbels for his word of honour that his statement was true and that he himself stood unconditionally behind Adolf Hitler. Goebbels hesitated at first, as this request did not seem entirely clear to him. It was only after I repeatedly asked him that I needed his word of honour as a responsible officer in order to see things clearly that he gave it to me. I then asked him to put me through to headquarters by telephone. Within a minute, the connection was established and Adolf Hitler was on the line in person. Goebbels briefed him briefly and then handed me the receiver. Adolf Hitler said something along the lines of:
‘Can you hear me? So I am alive! The assassination attempt has failed. A small clique of ambitious officers wanted to eliminate me. But now we have the saboteurs at the front. We shall make short work of this plague.
I am instructing you to restore peace and security in the Reich capital immediately, by force if necessary. To this end, you will be personally under my command until the Reichsführer-SS arrives in the Reich capital!” This phone call finally dispelled my doubts; my oath to Adolf Hitler still stood, and my sole concern now was to prevent unnecessary bloodshed through swift action and intervention.
From my time at the Berlin City Command Headquarters, I was aware of the orders for the units advancing on Berlin. In order to inform the commanders of the units ordered to Berlin of the actual situation, I sent orderly officers out to meet them from all directions. The briefing of the advancing troops was a complete success. I would like to state that all the commanders, who were as outraged as I was by the incidents, placed themselves unconditionally under my command, even though I was of lower rank. It thus became clear that the oath to the flag was binding on them all. Difficulties arose only where it was not possible to brief them in person.
Owing to the prevailing uncertainty and misunderstandings, it was a close shave in two instances where other military units were on the verge of confronting my own troops. At Fehrbelliner Platz, a tank brigade had assembled on the orders of the conspirators, but was able to be broken away from the ranks of the conspirators by a radio order from Colonel-General Guderian. This unit then undertook a reconnaissance mission of its own accord and came to the erroneous conclusion that the 12th Guard Regiment

‘Greater Germany’ was on the side of the conspirators and had taken Reich Minister Goebbels into custody. Some of the brigade’s tanks advanced in preparation for the planned operation, and it was a hair’s breadth away from bloodshed between German soldiers. The same situation unfolded in front of the Bendler Block, the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief of the Reserve Army, when a tank grenadier company attempted to relieve my regular guard detail. Thanks to the decisive intervention of several officers from my regiment, misunderstandings were cleared up at the last moment and an exchange of fire between German soldiers was averted.

The late afternoon of 20 July was filled with countless individual orders. Among other things, I had moved the ‘Großdeutschland’ Reserve Brigade from Cottbus to the outskirts of Berlin as a rapid-reaction reserve. I concentrated my own troops more closely around the Reich Chancellery complex in order to have a powerful force ready for immediate deployment at my disposal. I had the City Command Headquarters sealed off, as I had gained the impression that there were some suspicious individuals there. The City Commander himself, General von Hase, had driven to the Deputy General Command during these measures to discuss further action with the general appointed by the conspirators. They negotiated there for two hours and reached no decision. After von Hase’s return to his headquarters, I telephoned him and asked him to come to my command post at Goebbels’ official residence so that we could clarify the situation. At first he refused my request and demanded that, as his subordinate, I should come to headquarters. It was only when I pointed out that I had been personally commissioned by Adolf Hitler, under his direct authority, to restore peace and order in Berlin—and that he was therefore subordinate to me and would be fetched by me if he did not come—that he came to me of his own accord. At the time, I still had the impression that von Hase, like myself, had initially been misled and was unaware of the true situation. I therefore apologised to him for my unusual course of action. Hase was the very picture of amiability and expressed his appreciation for my independent decision to seek out Dr Goebbels, as this had prevented a great deal of harm. He also played the part of the uninformed man towards Goebbels and pretended to have no inkling of the whole affair. He was asked to remain available for further enquiries, and a room in Goebbels’ official residence was allocated to him.

By the evening, I still had no clear idea as to who the actual ringleader of the conspiracy might be. It was only following a report from an officer of my regiment who had been assigned to guard duty at the Bendler Block that I began to harbour suspicions. The report stated that, in addition to our permanent guard duty, staff officers were carrying out identity checks and that new identity cards had been issued. I therefore ordered the Bendler Block to be cordoned off by two companies.

Late that evening, the same officer reported to me that executions were taking place in the courtyard of the Bendler Block. I was deeply outraged by this, as I had taken great pride in the fact that the entire operation had been carried out without a single shot being fired up to that point. I therefore drove immediately to the Bendler Block to prevent any further executions. On entering the Bendler Block, I came across Colonel-General Fromm, the Commander-in-Chief of the Reserve Army. He was very agitated and appeared shaken. Recognising me, he addressed me: 'At last, a decent officer from Greater Germany. What do you know of the situation?' I gave him a brief account, telling him that I had been personally entrusted by the Führer with full authority to maintain peace and order in Berlin. As for the broader context, I advised him to contact Reich Minister Goebbels. Which is what happened.

What, then, had taken place in the Bendler Block in the meantime? Stauffenberg had flown to Berlin after the assassination attempt and, in the Bendler Block, had met Field Marshal von Witzleben and Colonel-Generals Höppner and Beck, and, together with General Olbrich, had begun to take charge. Colonel-General Fromm, as Commander-in-Chief of the Reserve Army, was also called upon to join them, but he vigorously refused. When Fromm learnt that Stauffenberg had personally killed Adolf Hitler (this was the generally held view), he wanted to arrest Stauffenberg. This led to the conspirators, in turn, arresting Fromm and locking him in his office. When, in the course of the afternoon, it became known that Adolf Hitler had survived, a number of General Staff officers from the Bendler Block joined forces and organised a counter-movement, which then led to Fromm's release. Fromm, now free to act as he pleased, turned the tables and had General Olbrich, Colonel von Stauffenberg and several other officers involved in the conspiracy tried by a court-martial and shot immediately. Colonel-General Beck was given the opportunity to shoot himself. Field Marshal von Witzleben and Colonel-General Höppner were arrested.

By the time I entered the Bendler Block, the executions had already taken place. I had nothing to do with them, and all the press allegations to that effect are nothing but malicious slander.

After Fromm had left the Bendler Block, I ordered the area to be cordoned off as strictly as possible and ensured that order was restored within the Bendler Block itself. The subsequent arrests and the seizure of material relating to the conspiracy were carried out by agents of the Reich Security Service on the orders of Reichsführer-SS Himmler.

On returning to my command post, I found Himmler there at around midnight. I reported to him on the measures I had been ordered to take. At daybreak, I was dismissed along with my unit.

Regarding the allegation that I had gained personal advantages through my conduct during those days, I have the following to say: At my express request, Adolf Hitler refrained from the intended awarding of the diamonds accompanying the Knight's Cross. I regarded the diamonds as a decoration for valour; I therefore did not wish to receive them for an operation in which not a single shot had been fired by my unit. I communicated this view of mine personally to Adolf Hitler, who acknowledged it. Moreover, I regarded the uprising of 20 July 1944 as a stain on the honour of the German officer corps, and I did not wish to be reminded of it by a decoration. Similarly, I declined the planned gift of an estate, pointing out that I was a soldier, hoped to remain so in future, and that an estate would therefore be of little use to me. My promotion to colonel was based on my service as a regimental commander at the front, having already been promoted to lieutenant-colonel whilst I was in command of the Guard Regiment prior to the events of 20 July. Just four weeks after
20 July, I requested a return to frontline duty, as I had no desire to be demoted to the status of an 'operetta officer' in Berlin. My request in this regard was granted. My subsequent promotion to Major-General resulted from my successful command of a brigade at the front.
If, however, the rumour is persistently spread that it was solely through my intervention that an undertaking which was in itself promising failed, and that I am therefore responsible for everything that has taken place from that day to the present, then I am certainly being given too much credit. I am personally far more modest and claim only the credit for having so effectively quelled a coup that had already failed from the outset that no fratricidal conflict ensued, and the world was spared the pitiful spectacle of an outbreak of the time-honoured German discord in the midst of our greatest shared distress. For

however much the fighters of the intra-German resistance may be officially celebrated in the camps of the Western and Eastern ‘victors’, deep down they are still despised, as we had to learn often enough from the mouths of Allied officers during our captivity and as was even confirmed to us by the Allied press.

The uprising of 20 July 1944 did not fail because of my intervention, but because of the lack of clear objectives and vision on the part of its organisers, who were united only in their rejection of Hitler, but were completely at odds on all other issues. It failed because it was launched with unclear ideas, prepared with inadequate resources and carried out with an almost shocking sense of helplessness. The cause of this technical and human failure, however — and this, unfortunately, cannot be glossed over — lies in the lack of personal courage that was evident in all those involved. Even a man such as Colonel Stauffenberg, who would undoubtedly have been a proven front-line officer, showed a complete lack of personal commitment in this matter — a commitment that was essential, at the very least, on the part of the perpetrator himself for such an undertaking to succeed. None other than Stauffenberg himself, through his conduct, delivered his fellow conspirators and himself to their doom. Instead of at least waiting for his bomb to explode near the conference room and personally ascertaining its effect, Colonel von Stauffenberg preferred to leave the scene of the crime as quickly as possible. And, upon his arrival in Berlin, to report to his fellow conspirators and superiors a piece of information whose accuracy he had not personally verified and which — as it later transpired — was false. It is not difficult to imagine what would have happened, under entirely normal circumstances, to a staff officer who, in such a significant matter, had been guilty of such negligence, leading to such incalculable consequences. His fate would probably not have been significantly different from that of Colonel von Stauffenberg. For it was only as a result of Stauffenberg’s false report that the co-conspirators in Berlin were prompted to emerge from their previous cover and commence their operational activities. Something they would wisely have refrained from doing had they known the actual outcome of the assassination attempt. At the very least, had they believed themselves to have been discovered, they would have taken entirely different measures. For there was still the possibility of exploiting the general confusion to immediately replace the failed assassination attempt with a new one. All this could have happened had Colonel von Stauffenberg remained at the scene until the bomb had detonated and had satisfied himself of the success of his undertaking. However, there remained another possibility: the Inspector of the Signals Corps, General Fellgiebel, who was present at the Führer’s headquarters, had received instructions from the conspirators to blow up the signals centre immediately after the assassination attempt, in order first of all to cut off the entire headquarters from the outside world and to prevent any influence from any figures in the surrounding

. Unlike Stauffenberg, Fellgiebel initially waited to see the outcome of the operation. However, when he learnt that the assassination attempt had failed and that the Führer was still alive, he did not — taking advantage of the confusion — seize his weapon to strike down the dictator he so hated, but instead hurried to the scene of the catastrophe to congratulate the Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht on having survived.

It will be recalled that the conspirators' original plan was to place the bomb (which, incidentally, came from England) in the assault pack of a lance corporal who was to demonstrate new field equipment to the Führer and who, had this plan been carried out, would inevitably have been blown to pieces. It was only the postponement of the planned demonstration that saved the life of this completely unsuspecting man.

At this point, however, the crucial issue surrounding 20 July 1944 becomes apparent: since time immemorial, officers and soldiers of the armed forces have been subject to special obligations. Those who bear arms require a stronger bond than civilian citizens, not least for the protection of the non-combatant population; for all too easily, without the iron grip of discipline—the ultimate foundation of which lies in the oath to the flag—a soldier bearing arms could become a marauder or a robber who dares to defy his superiors. World history is replete with examples of what becomes of a force that is no longer bound by the binding power of the oath. Even the Federal Border Guard will not be able to do without the oath, and it will be interesting to see what wording those will devise who could not preach loudly enough that the German soldier's loyalty to his oath during the Second World War was stupidity, if not something worse, whilst breaking one's oath deserves every praise. An oath with limited scope for withdrawal has not yet been devised; an oath is an oath, and there can be little room for interpretation on that point. Anyone who undermines the oath undermines the very foundations of the world, and must be clear in their mind that they are tampering with the last ties to which a person can cling in troubled times. Admittedly, world history has not lacked resolute individuals who, out of a sense of ultimate responsibility, have dared to take this step; but they possessed the moral right to act only if they were prepared to stand up for their cause with their whole being and, if necessary, to sacrifice themselves. The organisers of 20 July lacked this readiness, and that is why they failed. What is more: the principal figures were all officers. It is unlikely that their plans were aimed at keeping Germany defenceless for ever, in accordance with the victors' intentions. Their action, therefore, was intended to give rise to a renewed Wehrmacht and a renewed officer corps. But how could this renewed officer corps and the renewed Wehrmacht endure if the very foundation of their existence was a breach of oath? Did this breach of oath not also have to shape the thinking of subsequent sol-

and thus turn the army, in the manner of the late Roman legions, into a plaything of ambitious usurpers? The future will, in any case, have to grapple with this problem often enough after Nuremberg, Landsberg and Tokyo.

An officer who takes it upon himself to raise his weapon against the one to whom he himself, just like the youngest recruit, has sworn an oath of loyalty and obedience before God, can only spare himself, his comrades, and above all future generations of soldiers from the inevitable consequences of his deed if he himself, immediately after carrying out the act, puts an end to his own life, thereby taking the stain of breaking his oath with him to the grave.

These may be harsh principles, but it is unlikely that any armed force will ever be able to do without such principles, for what is at stake here are matters far more serious than the mind of a hasty newspaper hack can comprehend—matters upon which, ultimately, the security of human existence depends. Because none among the conspiratorsfound the courage to carry out the assassination with his own hand and then sacrifice himself on behalf of all, 20 July remained a revolt, a mere act of negation without a trace of a positive vision. I was left with the thankless task of completely stamping out the dying embers. The fact that this could be achieved without the use of force, and that it was, above all, the Army itself which, without calling in other branches of the Wehrmacht, carried out the necessary clean-up at that hour, does, however, fill me with pride.

If, then, complaints are now being voiced about the severity of the sentences handed down to the conspirators of

20 July, people are deliberately choosing to overlook the fact that, hitherto, in all belligerent states, high treason has been treated as treason against the state; that during the First World War, His Majesty's Government had Sir Roger Casement, who had established contact with the Central Powers whilst England was at war with Germany—a war in which Ireland had been compelled to take part—was shot in the Tower, and that the French wartime Prime Minister Clemenceau ordered indiscriminate mass executions among the mutinous frontline divisions in the spring of 1917, when, following the failure of the Nivelle Offensive, continuing the war seemed pointless to them.

Just how little the conspirators had considered the course of events should their revolt have succeeded is made unmistakably clear by the complete absence of any foreign policy strategy. The putschists were, just like the responsible German leadership, aware of the Casablanca resolutions. They knew of our enemies' intentions to annihilate us; despite having made contact with the Western Allies, they had no binding assurances whatsoever that Germany would be treated leniently should their plans for overthrow succeed. On sober assessment of the situation, they must have realised that this war was being waged not against Adolf Hitler's regime, but against the German people as a whole, and they undertook

nevertheless to provoke a fratricidal war within Germany, without regard for the consequences. Above all, they knew that the West was determined not only to destroy German industry, but also to hand over well over half of the Reich's territory to the most grim enemies of Europe, the Bolsheviks, for their free disposal. Their decision to revolt was driven far less by love for the German nation than by blind hatred of Hitler. Yet blind hatred has never given rise to any positive achievement. If any further proof of their indifference to the nation's fate had been required, it was unequivocally provided to the German nation by the silence of the survivors in the face of the acts of violence committed by the 'victors'.

There is no question as to what would have happened had the plot of 20 July 1944 succeeded: the German Eastern Front, which was at that very moment engaged in the fiercest defensive battles, would undoubtedly have collapsed as a result of the civil war that would inevitably have broken out and the associated disruption to supply lines. I myself received over 10,000 letters from German front-line soldiers at the time, who told me that they would have turned their weapons against their homeland had there been even the slightest suspicion of a rebellion within the reserve forces. Such was the sentiment at the front. A collapse of the Eastern Front, however, would not only have meant the deportation of millions more German soldiers to Russian prisoner-of-war camps, but would also have prevented the resettlement of countless German women and children who were resident in the eastern territories of the Reich or had been resettled there as a result of the Western Allies' aerial terror. When Colonel-General Jodl was questioned by the Nuremberg judges as to why he had advocated the continuation of German resistance, he replied that this was the only way to save millions of German women and children, and the bulk of the Eastern Army, from falling into Russian hands. Grand Admiral Dönitz put forward the same view in Nuremberg, a view which only malice or stupidity would attempt to refute.

One can only speculate as to the further consequences of a collapse of the German Eastern Front. What is certain, in any case, is that the aim of Soviet military strategy was to create a fait accompli before the arrival of the Western Allies in Europe; that is to say, to continue the advance as far as the Rhine in order thereby to secure a link-up with a carefully pro-Bolshevik France. For one thing the historiography of coming decades will unequivocally establish: it was solely the dogged resistance of battered German frontline divisions before Vienna, Prague, Berlin, Breslau and Stettin in the days of May 1945 that saved the rest of Europe from being finally overwhelmed by Bolshevism.

Germany's problems have long since become Europe's as well. From this perspective, however, history will one day prove right those who, then as now, recognised the necessity of

uncompromising struggle to preserve the Reich as the foremost of all tasks, and who were prepared to regard their own property and lives as of little consequence for that cause.

When Prussian Germany collapsed under Napoleon's onslaught almost 150 years ago and the freedom of Europe seemed lost, General Clausewitz declared that an honourable downfall also held within it the promise of the future. It seems to me that it was we who, on 20 July 1944, chose the path of honourable defeat and that, in so doing, we simultaneously laid the foundations for a future resurgence which will finally bring to this tormented continent the peace that the Allied victory had seemed to have pushed into an unattainable distance.

II. PART

German Politics and the Question of Remilitarisation

My participation in the Godesberg Conference and the consequences this had for me personally in the eyes of the German public inevitably led me into politics. Time and again, questions have been put to me from both within Germany and abroad as to how this came about and what fundamental views guided me in this matter. I would like to summarise, in brief, the answer I gave to a well-known English officer and journalist:

Following the collapse, the occupying powers licensed political parties in Germany which, in all four occupation zones, proved to be, to a greater or lesser extent, instruments of the respective Allied policies. They did not confine themselves merely to doing their utmost to eradicate National Socialism and its consequences, but set about destroying virtually all the great and noble values handed down from Germany's past, not least the state order of the Reich, which had stood the test of time for over a millennium. This could never find the heartfelt approval of the German people, especially not among the generation that had fought at the front and the younger generation. In the western occupation zones, too, the formation of free political parties reflecting the true will of the people was prevented right up until after the Bundestag elections. In order to bring this about, Dr Gerhard Krüger and Dr Fritz Doris approached me – who was living in Varel as a journeyman bricklayer – with a request to join them in calling upon the nationalist forces to unite politically.

After lengthy preparations, the Socialist Reich Party (SRP) was founded in Hanover on 2 October 1949. Opposing propaganda, particularly abroad, has sought to create the impression that this is a party based on the 'Führer principle' and centred exclusively on my person.

A political organisation based on the 'Führer principle' would be completely at odds with our fundamental beliefs and also with my own political views. At the head of the SRP is a democratically elected five-member executive committee, with Dr Doris as party chairperson, of whom I am the deputy.

The SRP has attracted members from all parts and strata of the German people. It is the only party in West Germany supported by young people and the younger generation of front-line soldiers from the Second World War, who until then had been excluded from political life and had remained critically on the sidelines. Naturally, those sections of the population hardest hit by the policies pursued since 1945 – such as those displaced from their homelands, the disenfranchised, the unemployed and those who returned home late – are particularly well represented in our ranks, as the licensed parties were unable to win their trust or had let them down. The utterly misguided Bonn policies have drawn large sections of the farming community to the SRP, but it has also gained a strong following among the working classes.

The SRP's electoral success in Lower Saxony is a sign of the German people's rediscovery of their dignity and honour, and the result of the utterly misguided post-war policies of the occupying powers, whose incompetence even surpasses that of the victors' dictates following the First World War. A great, freedom-loving and cultured people cannot be disenfranchised in the long run. Nor is this possible with the help of an Eastern or Western puppet government. The Bonn government has failed to bring about an improvement in the national, social and economic plight of the broadest sections of the population and to win the trust of the German people. The attempt to explain the result of the Lower Saxony state election as stemming from excessive nationalism and radicalism on the part of the SRP is completely misguided. Despite the sharpness of its fundamental criticism of the occupation policy and the Bonn government's course, the SRP conducted its election campaign with far greater objectivity than was the case with its opponents, who abused public funds. Bonn's obvious failure to address the German people's basic needs has made it so easy for us to criticise the prevailing conditions and government measures – and thus to secure this election victory. In the local elections in Bremen, the SRP was able, for the first time, to make significant gains in a major city, despite the counter-pressure which, as experience shows, tends to be particularly strong there. We have made significant inroads not only in the suburbs with a rural character, but also in purely industrial working-class districts.

The claim—often made, particularly abroad—that the SRP is 'neo-Nazi' is a deliberate attempt to distort and belittle our objectives. We take the view that it would be a fundamental political error to seek to restore any era that has been superseded by history, whether it be the Wilhelmine Empire, the Weimar Republic or the Third Reich. Naturally, like all people, we are rooted in our past, which we may well overcome but cannot erase. We endeavour to learn from our history in order to avoid mistakes that were once made and to adopt the good wherever we find it. I am now of the view — otherwise I would have to believe in a collective guilt on the part of the entire German people — that

even during the period from 1933 to 1945, not everything that was done was bad. What we have learnt, however, is that any form of dictatorship – whether exercised by an individual or a group – and any one-party state that suppresses the healthy concept of political opposition and any possibility of public criticism, must be rejected. We do not intend to gloss over anything negative that occurred in Germany during the period of the revolution. But neither do we wish to fail to help bring about the breakthrough of the new 20th-century philosophy of life, which commits the individual to the principle of voluntary service to the community. As Germans, we claim the right to combine the recognition of our obligation to socialism with a clear commitment to the national ideal and to our people's inherent rights.

The SRP is committed to the moral bond and integration of the individual into the community, to a free yet wholeheartedly committed personality, and to a form of socialism that corresponds to the distinctive character of the German people. This results in an unreserved endorsement of a liberal structure for domestic political life and the principle of the rule of law. In the concept of the Reich, it affirms the form of state organisation of the German people, rooted in their national character and history, with the aim of their integration, on an equal footing and with equal obligations, into a newly organised pan-European whole.

We fundamentally reject any form of imperialism. Our commitment to the concept of the Reich in no way implies German hegemony in the European sphere. Our respect for the historically established forms and rights of other peoples is so deeply rooted within us and has been so strengthened by the experiences of the recent past that we regard any curtailment of the rights to life, particularly of small nations, as an attack on the pan-European objective. Imperialism means the destruction of the political and cultural autonomy of peoples and, with it, the foundation for a healthy order on our torn and devastated continent.

We demand and expect, however, that other nations too should adopt the same fundamental attitude towards the German people. Any attempt to perpetuate the division of Germany or to exploit its political weakness by severing the Saar region and the German territories east of the Oder-Neisse line from the Reich must be regarded by us as imperialist victor's arbitrariness, which prevents a genuine pacification of the continent. Anyone in Europe today who pays homage to imperialism, anyone who seeks to tear the Saar and the territories east of the Oder-Neisse line away from Germany, is pursuing a policy of catastrophe that must one day end in a new world war.

The SRP seeks the unification of all Germans of their own free will within a German Reich that must be free and independent both internally and externally. In this regard, it must be guaranteed by law that no government may relinquish any part of German territory. Only through the restoration of—

restoration of German sovereignty and unity will it be possible to unite Europe into a fully independent entity, standing as a force alongside the other world powers. In its fundamental political outlook, too, Europe must differ fundamentally from narrow-minded Western capitalism and Bolshevik collectivism if it is to fulfil its role in the world of the 20th century. We must succeed in making Europe—and within it, Germany—the bearer of a new, just social order, which can only be a socialist one. This socialism—which, as I have already emphasised, must correspond to the distinctive character of each nation—is intended to enhance the creative forces and achievements of every nation and of Europe as a whole, so that they may master their shared destiny.

The victorious powers of the Second World War themselves destroyed the possibility of a timely conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany by preventing, in contrast to their actions in Japan, the continued existence of a German government after the surrender. They made matters worse by arbitrarily dividing the former German Reich—which, under international law, continued to exist even after the defeat—into four parts and leaving the individual parts almost entirely to the discretion of the respective occupying powers declared to be responsible for them. When the confrontation between East and West then escalated into an open conflict, the four occupying powers themselves had destroyed the very conditions necessary for a peace treaty. However, the conclusion of a peace treaty is never possible for part of Germany, but only for the whole. The German people have the irrefutable right, as a whole, to determine their own national destiny. The creation of a divided Germany was a fundamental error which can only be rectified by the immediate establishment of a pan-German state solution. As long as the division of the world persists in the form of an open conflict, it will not be possible to reach a peace settlement regarding Germany that is valid under international law.

It is clear from what I have said so far that we will never allow ourselves to be separated from our brothers in the Soviet zone. We are not only prepared to cooperate with our brothers in every way, but indeed obliged to do so. Otherwise, we Germans would be engaging in self-mutilation. But who would demand that we do such a thing? Might it be those who, like the British and Americans, the Soviets and the French, bear ultimate responsibility for the division of Germany? Genuine cooperation, however, is only possible in freedom, not between satellite governments.

There will never be any common ground for us with Bolshevism, against which my generation has fought a passionate political and military defensive struggle since our youth. It is proof of the utter failure of West German politicians that, in their indecisive weakness, they have, of all things, left the question of a united Germany to the Bolshevik propaganda machine.

It must be regarded as a defining feature of the Bonn government that all fundamental political decisions in Germany since the collapse have been at odds with the inner laws of life and the genuine expression of the people's will, and that even the most far-reaching measures in West Germany since 1945 have been implemented without the direct consent of the people. The licensing policy of the occupying powers has sidelined significant forces in the formation of political parties. The Basic Law was not drafted by a directly elected representative body, nor, contrary to the original assurances, was it ratified by a referendum. The Head of State was not elected directly by the people. Now the remilitarisation of West Germany – the possibility of which was not even contemplated when the Basic Law was enacted or when the Bundestag was elected – is simply being rushed through by means of international negotiations, only to be confirmed in the Bundestag, in all likelihood, by a narrow majority. In a democracy, however, it is the people themselves—and indeed the people as a whole—who must decide on their Basic Law and on the legal framework governing their will to defend themselves. This decision must not be taken through a private initiative or pursued with the help of a party directed from abroad. It must take place through the official channel of a referendum or, at the very least, through a representative body elected directly for this purpose.

In general, all decisions on German matters cannot be taken by a constituent state, but only by a pan-German representation enjoying equal rights on the international stage. The leaders of the Federal Republic seem to lack any sense of the unique opportunity currently presented to them to make headway on the pan-German question. Germany can fulfil its European role, for which it is prepared, only as a unified nation and with equal rights.

Just as hatred and greed laid the foundations for fresh calamity at Versailles and Saint-Germain, so too were the same principles of disorder—with their devastating consequences—applied at Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam. The world was divided into two parts: East and West. On one side stood America; on the other, Soviet Russia as the dominant power. The policies of these two world giants amounted to incorporating and subordinating the nations and territories that were still free into either the Eastern or Western concept of power.

We Germans felt the consequences of such global dualism most acutely, because the demarcation line cut right through the heart of Germany. It is regrettable that, to this day, our responsible politicians have not even made an attempt to pursue a truly independent German – and thus European – policy. Bonn has, more or less, implemented the policies of the political West, whilst Pankow has implemented those of the political East. This alignment has so far taken place

at the political and economic levels. Military integration is now imminent. We have thus systematically contributed to the establishment and expansion of a fortress-like structure, which has hitherto been managed using Cold War methods, so that, should such a satellite policy continue, it is only a matter of time before this Cold War inevitably escalates into a hot war. On the question of remilitarisation, the Socialist Reich Party, in contrast to Bonn and Pankow, takes the view that the foremost task of German politicians and statesmen must be, under all circumstances, to safeguard the very substance of the German people – the life of our nation – through the coming conflict
. Any discussion of remilitarisation must therefore be based on the inviolability of German territory. We are of the opinion that the question of remilitarisation is not a military but a political problem. First and foremost, responsible German statesmen and politicians must lay the groundwork and establish the framework before German military leaders enter into military negotiations with generals from the East or the West.
We cannot accept this happening at a time when we do not even possess our sovereignty or a peace treaty, and when anyone found with a weapon in their hand during the impending conflict may rightly be shot as a privateer. We cannot accept this happening at a time when men of honour such as Dönltz and Raeder are being held behind prison walls in Spandau as war criminals and are being treated far more harshly there than, for example, Ilse Koch or the multiple murderer Pleil. The same applies to Field Marshals Kesselring and Manstein in Werl, or Sepp Dietrich in Landsberg, and others who are imprisoned there for actions that are only judged as war crimes when committed by Germans.
Nor do we have any sympathy for the idea that, under these political circumstances, we should be expected to provide soldiers to serve foreign interests, when at the same time hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war are still being held in Russia in contravention of international law, and the Federal Government and the Western world are rarely applying all available political and economic pressure to secure the return of these unfortunate comrades of ours, indeed, whilst at the same time, for example in France, over 2,000 SS men are still being held behind prison walls—in some cases without a court judgement—for acts which French lawyers have established that, even applying the strictest possible criteria, only 5 per cent of these men could possibly have been in the areas where the alleged crimes are said to have taken place.
I do not know how one can reconcile the honour of the German soldier with offering Germans as soldiers under such circumstances. Negotiations on remilitarisation should not have been entered into at all as long as the clear demand for the release of 26

German soldiers held in Western Allied prisons had not been met. There is a point regarding the question of honour for the German people which neither the government nor the negotiators appointed by it, nor indeed anyone holding the rank of officer, may overstep.

I would, however, like to address the issue of remilitarisation without any resentment, from a very sober and objective standpoint. It is certainly clear that, in the context of the Cold War, Russia is considerably superior to the political West. On the other hand, it is the last country to wish for a hot war. For Russia knows full well that, in the long run, it is considerably inferior to American military and armaments potential, as it faces enormous economic constraints which have only been exacerbated by the emergence of the 'Iron Curtain'. Consequently, as part of its imperialist ambitions, Russia has very skilfully and systematically surrounded itself with a myriad of colonial peoples and satellite states, forming a global belt of armoured forces and fortifications. It is endeavouring, by instigating civil wars in China, Korea, Indochina, Tibet, etc., to pin down America's overwhelming military and armaments potential—which must be brought in from afar—as far as possible along a rubber front stretching 10,000 to 15,000 km on a secondary theatre of war, so that it may be worn down and exhausted.

It is also clear that Russia has so far been successful with this tactic. In Korea alone, substantial American forces have been pinned down and are now forced to fight around the 38th parallel. Viewed in this light, it also becomes clear why, in early 1951, the victoriously advancing Chinese forces did not drive the UN troops into the sea, but instead allowed them to advance again, initially for no apparent reason, and are now forcing them to fight alternately north and south of the
38th parallel. Moscow has no interest whatsoever in clearing up this front; on the contrary, it needs to tie down as many Western forces as possible on a secondary theatre of war so that they cannot be deployed on a potential main theatre of war.

Russia and America, as well as we Europeans, know full well that at present neither the Asian nor the European region is the decisive focus of global tension. The crux of this global escalation, however, lies in truth in the south, in Persia and the Near East. On the one hand there is American and British oil, and on the other, in the Caucasus, Russian oil, in a ratio of 1:11. Should Moscow lose its oil reserves, which are concentrated in the Caucasus, Russia will have lost the coming global conflict from the outset. However, should the political West lose its oil, it too would have far slimmer prospects of successfully weathering the early stages of a forthcoming global conflict. Given these political, economic and military realities, I therefore believe that Russia must undertake the main deployment of its military forces 27

to protect its lifeline in the south. Moscow can therefore have no interest whatsoever in the emergence of a third front behind its lines in Europe. It looks as though Hitler's old campaign plan is to be staged once more, only with the roles reversed. In the last world war, we launched an offensive from Europe into Russia in order to neutralise the Caucasus with a pincer movement. The second prong of the pincer movement was to be led by Field Marshal Rommel from North Africa, also towards the Near East and the Caucasus.

Through the development and expansion of its presence in the Mediterranean and North African regions, America now appears to have clearly shifted its focus southwards, whilst we Europeans are to be left with the sole task of tying down as many Russian forces as possible deep within European territory through delaying resistance. For us Germans, this would mean that, in the event of a future conflict, we would become a theatre of world war. With such planning, America—and thus Bonn as well—has undoubtedly chosen Persian oil over 66 million Germans.

But what of Europe's current defence capabilities

at present? Eisenhower's work in Europe has undoubtedly shown that, in view of the Italian, French and Benelux armed forces, European defence readiness is of little practical significance. Added to this is the fact that in Italy and France a high percentage of the population has voted for communist parties, which is why the expected morale in combat must also be assessed negatively. In order to make European defence readiness possible at all, it was therefore necessary to rely on West Germany. The Schuman Plan was intended to ensure the material rearmament, whilst remilitarisation was to ensure the manpower rearmament, in the spirit of a European peripheral state structure. According to the remarks of the then French Minister of Defence, Jules Moches, we Germans are to have the honour of being allowed to establish the forward combat outposts between the Elbe and the Rhine. Hence the preparations to blow up the bridges, to undermine the roads leading towards the Rhine, and to prepare for the possible demolition of the Loreley Rock in order to dam up the Upper Rhine, so that the combat outposts for the Maginot Line could hold their positions there for a few hours longer.

There is no doubt that America has today placed its political — and thus, despite the views of certain American military figures, also its military — bets on France. Our potential is thus to be used solely to bolster a structure of peripheral European states, rather than, conversely, pursuing a policy that leads to the strengthening of the Central European region. Within a year at the latest, America will have to be convinced that the French card does not trump the others.

As long as we are expected to remilitarise without the future soldiers knowing what they are supposed to be fighting for, and as long as

Germany is envisaged as the future theatre of a world war, no military forces will be found here in Germany willing to make themselves available under such un-German and un-European conditions. It is therefore no coincidence that, to date, only generals of no significant rank or standing have volunteered for remilitarisation in this sense.

The Socialist Reich Party takes the view that such inadequate rearmament of Western Europe in accordance with American interests poses a particular risk of a Russian pre-emptive war, as Moscow cannot tolerate the emergence of a deadly threat behind its back in the long term. In view of the impending conflict over the strategic chokepoint in the Caucasus, Russia would first have to launch a pre-emptive war in order to rid itself of the American threat to its rear in Europe. For us Germans, however, this would mean that we would certainly become a theatre of war. Any subsequent liberation by the political West would be of no interest to us whatsoever. For before the Russians make their move, they will presumably drop their bombs first. If the Soviets push through here, the Western world's carpet bombing – and probably atomic bombs as well – will follow. American voices have openly admitted that the Ruhr region, under Russian control, would be worth an atomic bomb. Mr Eisenhower has stated that he, too, would be prepared to deploy the atomic bomb if it were in America's best interests. After liberation, the same fate would befall us once more; presumably half of the German population would no longer be alive, the last remaining energy resources would be located either in the political East or West, the mines would be flooded, industry would be stripped down to its foundations, and so on.

Such a renewed 'liberation' would, on an unimaginable scale, turn into reality here what has already become a fact in Korea. There, every Korean is right to ask: what good is American 'liberation' to us? Apart from rubble and the dead, there is practically nothing left here to liberate. Such a renewed 'liberation' might, in the eyes of some Americans, ultimately represent a solution to the Russian problem, but at the same time it would also mean the resolution of the German question in the same breath – in other words, nothing other than the continuation of the Morgenthau Plan by other means. Surely we Germans cannot, by pitting Russian soldiers against American soldiers, play the role of Winkelried for the others, driving spears into our own chests for the sake of foreign interests – that is, decimating ourselves through a devastating fratricidal war and, moreover, allowing ourselves to be condemned to becoming a theatre of world war. Such a policy will only result in us sacrificing ourselves in the front battalions for foreign interests, instead of pursuing a policy that prevents us from becoming a theatre of world war and that might one day enable us to lead the last battalion onto the battlefield.

Our policy must therefore aim to create, between the two spheres of tension in the East and West, a separating element: the entire European continent, with a Germany that is equal in rights and equally respected. We must transform the construction and expansion of the fortifications carried out to date into a process of dismantling, thereby creating not a neutral zone, but the starting point for the formation of a third power capable of holding its own between the two world giants. This can only happen if the German region, as the heart of the Western world, once again assumes its role as the heart, and if we pursue a policy that takes account of the needs of our region. We must transform the Iron Curtain, which has been drawn right through the heart of Europe and thus right through the heart of Germany, into a protective wall around Europe, so that, as an equal partner amongst the other European nations, we may be masters and sovereigns in our own land. I believe that once this frontline zone of peace has been established, there will be no one here who would not be prepared to sacrifice themselves and their possessions to preserve our freedom. We do not wish to bleed to death as American or Russian soldiers for foreign interests, but only to fight for our very own German and European interests. America has had to recognise that it will not be possible to establish a European front without the decent German front-line soldiers. That is why, even as a defeated and unarmed people, we remain an absolutely real power. The Soviets will also have to take this into account. For Russia has gained nothing in the long run by pushing its military forces into the European sphere. Just as we were in the last war, Russia would be forced, by the occupation of Norway, to tie up a vast number of divisions—which would thus be unavailable for the decisive battle—in order to secure vulnerable flanks. The main thing is that here in Europe and in Germany, over the coming years, we succeed in mobilising the will for freedom and the will for an independent German and European policy, thereby creating an independent political factor that is unwilling to be harnessed to the eastern chariot, nor indeed to the western one.

There is no doubt that, through Grotewohl's initiative on the question of 'all-German elections' – which it instigated – the Kremlin seeks to achieve a specific political objective. It has succeeded in causing confusion within the Western camp. Federal Chancellor Dr Adenauer initially responded with a flat 'no'. In doing so, he handed the Bolsheviks a propaganda weapon. Even a subsequent correction could not make up for this mistake on Adenauer's part. Initially, Bonn put on an air of composure, only to then launch an overzealous sham initiative. It is unmistakable that the SED members were acting solely on orders from Moscow and, in truth, fear a threat to their own influence. But what do the Russians want? Is this merely a tactical manoeuvre, or is it an offer that is meant in earnest?

The SPD, more skilfully than the government, wants to put this to the test in order to use Berlin as a litmus test to uncover the secret behind Russian intentions. Is this as simple as Dr Schumacher and Mr Reuter imagine? The Soviets are pursuing specific objectives. They will not hand free all-German elections – the outcome of which they cannot possibly be unaware of – to the West as a gift without anything in return. Stalin will not, like Adenauer with regard to the West, agree to make a concession without securing the outcome.

As explained, the Russians fear the emergence of a third front, which could force them, in the event of an armed conflict in Europe, to deploy such substantial forces that the weak spot in their defensive belt in the Middle East would be put at even greater risk. Stalin knows what a formidable opponent the German soldier has been. Even though Germany's armament and internal defence readiness do not bear comparison with 1941 – and therefore future West German units cannot be credited with the same combat effectiveness as at that time – he regards the inclusion of the Federal Republic in Atlantic planning as a decisive strengthening of Western European military power. This would result in a correspondingly greater weakening of the front in the Middle East, which is of vital importance to Russia.

For this reason, Grotewohl must, against his personal and party interests, take the initiative on the all-German question in order to create, at the very last minute, a basis for the effective involvement of the Soviet Union in the issue of West German remilitarisation. It seems as though Stalin wishes to suggest that he would be prepared to make very concrete concessions if one were willing to meet him halfway on this issue. However, it is unlikely that the Kremlin will relinquish any part of its position in Berlin in advance without at least some preliminary clarification having been reached regarding the overall issue at stake. For the Soviets, the whole matter constitutes an indivisible whole, a fact which neither the Federal Government nor the SPD took into account in their statements.

For us Germans, there is a great deal at stake. Probably even our very existence as a people. At the very least, there is a danger that — if we do not capitalise on the situation — the possibility of restoring German unity will be postponed for the foreseeable future and may only be re-established through a war, which, despite a successful operation, could spell the death of the patient.

Bonn, however, still fails to take any real initiative on this issue of restoring German unity. The Federal Chancellor does not seem to believe that such an opportunity fits into his rigidly defined path for future political development. The favourable position that we Germans currently hold is not being utilised in any way that is truly in Germany's interests. Evidently, Dr Adenauer

is to dispel any Western mistrust of Germany by aligning himself completely with a political course that is more Western than the West itself. Only in this light can his stance on the Saar question, with regard to the Schuman Plan and Germany's defence contribution within a European army – which could almost be described as Germany's relinquishment of its own defence in favour of defending foreign occupants – be understood. Only in this light can it also be understood that he immediately responded positively to the latest Schuman proposal, the European Coal and Steel Community and the Pleven Plan by calling for a European
political organisation to establish a common foreign policy, even though the primary stated aim in Paris is an anti-German one: to prevent the Federal Government from pursuing a policy of isolationism once West Germany has attained relative or complete sovereignty. But Bonn, through its discriminatory measures against the National Opposition—which is deliberately portrayed to the world as suspected of neo-fascism—has itself contributed to undermining foreign confidence.

The Federal Chancellor is pursuing his course with rigid consistency and blindness. In view of the plight of our displaced persons and those driven from their homes by bombing, he dares to suggest that prioritising defence expenditure over housing construction is 'not only wise, but also socially responsible'. Hermann Göring, with his talk of 'guns instead of butter', would turn pale with envy at such enthusiasm for rearmament on the part of a civilian.

In Hamburg, Mr Spaak hinted at what is at stake for the Western powers: the clear integration of Germany not into the European, but into the Atlantic community, that is, for the purpose of Atlantic – not European – defence. That means Germany as a battlefield. We Germans, however, should have the courage to seize an opportunity that fate has unexpectedly thrown our way following a profound collapse – to capitalise on the great value that our blood and the military strength of our people currently represent, despite everything, for our own vital interests, which are at the same time European interests. In doing so, we would be making the decision in favour of a peaceful solution. But when the decision on German unity is made, it is not the French and the British, the Russians and the Americans, but the Germans who have the final say. At this hour, true diplomacy could prove its worth in a unique way if it were combined with the will of the people, who desire peace and justice, freedom and unity for all Germans.

The realisation that the survival of the West will only be possible at all if the German Empire is restored will dawn all the more quickly on other nations if we are prepared to defend our own interests. Europe will live if Germany lives, and Europe will perish if there is an intention to destroy us. The more we defend our legitimate national interests today, the better Europeans we are as a result.

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